

Success Story: Wildland Fire Lesson's Learned Center Excellence in Firefighter Preparedness, Training, and Safety

The Wildland Fire Lesson's Learned Center (LLC, <http://www.wildfirelessons.net/>), based at the National Advanced Fire Resource Institute in Tucson, AZ, is an inter-agency champion in adopting the business practices of *organizational learning* to improve firefighting safety and decision making for both fire suppression and fire-use activities. The ability to improve performance by learning faster and better is a tremendous aid in speeding up the safe implementation of National Fire Plan goals and objectives.

Recognizing the value of organizational learning, businesses ranging from the military to banking have placed "lessons learned" at the heart of their safety and performance improvement programs. The lessons learned concept focuses on the collection and analysis of operational experiences, followed by incorporation of resulting lessons into training and operations. Under the leadership of Paula Nasiatka and David Christenson, the LLC has initiated innovative methods for applying "lessons learned" concepts to wildland fire activities.

The LLC center has worked with Harvard University and the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan to initiate training sessions and workshops revolving around the concepts of the learning organization. These sessions included two advanced *After Action Review* training classes in Salt Lake City and two *Managing the Unexpected* workshops in Santa Fe, NM, and Jacksonville, FL. These sessions were attended by over three hundred inter-agency fire personnel working at all organizational levels.

After the workshops and using the concepts of *lessons learned* as a framework, LLC produced the following products:

- National training materials
 - DVD's for both *After Action Reviews* and *High Reliability Organizing*.
 - Interviews with prescribed burn bosses and fire ecologists for use in classes as examples of best practices.
 - A national publication on how to organize and conduct Staff Rides.
- Peer-to-peer communication and knowledge exchange
 - Roll-ups of *After Action Reviews*.
 - A multi-faceted web log *My Fire Community* (<http://myfirecommunity.net/>)
 - An internet based, nationally distributed newsletter titled "*Scratchline*".

LLC's work supports at least three of the NFP's primary goals; it improves fire suppression work, particularly in the area of firefighting safety, and, through improving decision making processes, speeds up the reduction of hazardous fuels and the restoration of fire-adapted ecosystems. The LLC's work is strongly collaborative, with federal and State participation in all of their activities. Also, LLC cooperates with The Nature Conservancy, the Center for Army Lesson's Learned, NWCG working teams, the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute, Rocky Mountain Research Station, and Harvard University Business School.